

COLLECTING PERFINS

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As a young boy I began over 50 years ago saving all these little steel engravings I could find, at a time when I knew no better than to mount hollow squares of guide lines: and that collection has continued through the starts and stops of varying activity with stamps. With that background it was only natural to save initials when they began appearing and had I been more active, philately, at that time my album would be fatter.

Not until about 15 years ago did I begin to mount these, putting into a black-paged kodak album, allowing 2 pages for each initial letter, designs only being mounted. At the same time a list of all designs was made to carry in my pocket as a guide to collecting and exchanging.

A few months ago album expansion became necessary and my approximately 500 U. S. designs and 500 foreign were remounted into 2 loose-leaf albums composed of 8½ x 11 inch green and black pages supplied by The Western Stamp Collector and interleaved with glassine sheets. The U. S. album is green with black pages and the foreign one is black with green pages. A generous (?) maximum of 4 pages was allowed for each index letter but—you guessed it—some letters are now badly crowded in spots. In the top outer corner of each page a small circular, red-edged label (Dennison's 254) was placed, showing the first and second initials of the designs thereon. With a guide card, pencil dots were so arranged on the sheets that 7 rows of 6 and 7 stamps could be mounted without real crowding, as I wished to save space as much as possible. A home-made thumb index of the pages was made of ¼ inch strips of 1-inch butcher paper so placed on the edges of the sheets as to protrude about ⅜ inch.

Designs only have been mounted though I've been saving the different denominations, issues and positions, and wondering how to get them on display. Stamps have been mounted face down on the dark sheets, the designs showing up splendidly. When known the user's name and address is written on the stamp above the design, with a hard pencil, the Scott number is placed in the lower left corner and at the right is an ab-

breviation to indicate whether the design was placed in normal position, invert, reserved, etc. I read that some collectors pay no attention to position of designs, because they are applied by hand and might be "made to order" Regardless of how it was applied, there it is, and the two-cent Pan-American stamp with inverted center still brings thousands of dollars in spite of the fact that some person placed a sheet improperly. Inverts, doubles, etc. in hand-stamped precancels also greatly influence list prices:—let's not fool ourselves for with an increase in perfin collectors will come a close regard for positions by many.

With my coming need for mounting again, I'm faced with the hope of making this the last such job but haven't yet decided how to do it. The plan of a design to a page is simplest, but takes so much room and leaves so much unused space unless one has a very large collection. I'm tempted to simply expand my present method where necessary, and start another set of those designs of which I have more than one Scott number, making some sort of mark in the full set to indicate the more complete page in the more detailed album. By the way, can't someone suggest a satisfactory term for the different Scott numbers of each design. **Issues**, often used, seems improper because sets are correctly so designated.

In my detailed album I plan a well-centered design at the top of the page, face down, with a small bit of white paper just below it, bearing the address of the user. It seems as though any attempt to mount by values and years of issue will mean continued remounting unless we can learn from the various users what stamps they have perforated and probably many users keep no such record.

If we could secure from the perforator manufacturers data regarding their users and addresses, much of the present uncertainty of alphabetical arrangement would be eliminated, though the placing of future users would always make new problems.

Lets hear of simple methods of storing duplicate perfins.

The editors have come to the conclusion that it is much better for an item to be omitted from the catalog than that it should be in error.